

Raptor Persecution UK

Prominent falconer & eagle breeder Andrew Knowles-Brown guilty of welfare offences relating to ~90 eagles in Scotland

RaptorPersecutionUK
October 15, 2024
News

The long-running trial of prominent falconer and eagle breeder Andrew Knowles-Brown, 69, from Elvanfoot, Scotland concluded at Lanark Sheriff Court yesterday where he was found guilty of multiple offences relating to the welfare of approx 90 eagles and some parrots at his breeding facility, the Scottish Eagle Centre.

Accused details	Location	Date	Court reference no.	PF reference no.	Court room	Hearing time
Andrew KNOWLES-BROWN	Lanark Sheriff Court	Monday 14 October 2024	SC2020-071299	LN20000620	Court 2	10:00

This was the second trial Knowles-Brown had faced – in February 2023 he was cleared of all charges at Lanark Sheriff Court in relation to the alleged mistreatment of ten imported White-bellied sea eagles at the Scottish Eagle Centre (see [here](#)).

However, for reasons that are still unclear to me, the charges facing Knowles-Brown were split into two separate trials, with the second trial focusing on allegations of causing unnecessary suffering to a number of eagle species, failing to ensure the welfare of a number of parrots, and failing to ensure the welfare of approx 90 eagles. Knowles-Brown, and his fellow accused, Alan Rothery, 65, had denied all the charges.



Golden eagle photo by [Pete Walkden](#)

The charges against Rothery were not proven but Knowles-Brown was found guilty of all charges except one (in relation to the welfare of a golden eagle). He was found to have caused unnecessary suffering to the eagles and parrots and to have failed to protect them from injury, suffering and disease between June and December 2019.

Many of the birds were found in squalid caged conditions where they were unable to exhibit natural behaviour and had no access to clean water.

This investigation has been ongoing for five years, since the Scottish SPCA and Police Scotland raided the Scottish Eagle Centre in January 2019 amidst concerns for the welfare of the eagles being bred by Knowles-Brown.

Eagle expert Dave Anderson from the Scottish Raptor Study Group attended the raid to safely catch and handle any birds that the vets wanted to inspect. Following the end of the trial yesterday, Dave commented:

“I was genuinely shocked at how the birds were being kept. Long rows of golden eagles tethered on bow perches, which had clearly been there for some time and allowed limited movement other than a hop from ground to perch.

The blocks of box profile cages running parallel to each other were reminiscent of some old Victorian film and reminded me of jail cells or a lunatic asylum.

Different species of eagle were housed next to each other, some noisy like the sea eagles of which there were many, next to Aquila eagles such as Golden and Verreauxs, where calling and screams from their neighbours, the only light was upwards! To me nothing could be more depressing.

I came in to the yard where an African fish eagle was calling through the bars of its caged window, with no water and feet deep of unused food and faeces. The door was locked so we couldn't gain entry, and no key was found to enter that cage.

We moved around finding squalid conditions in all corners, rat cages in the drains. We moved to yet another section where we found a Tawny eagle on the floor of an aviary where 2 other eagles were defecating on top of it, the grounded eagle had no where to go, this bird could not open its foot and its wings were severely damaged. I caught and held this bird so it could be assessed by an avian vet. I held this poor eagle as it was put to sleep. What a sad waste of a life, this bird had clearly been suffering for some time.

In my opinion, none of this obsession was to benefit eagle conservation, this seemed to be for profit and profit only by someone who claims to care and know about eagles. I have worked with wild eagles for more than 40 years, I still really cant put in to words just how such a facility, and the conditions all those poor eagles were made to live in, make me feel. I am extremely angry about what I saw but hopefully some form of justice will be handed down to Mr Knowles-Brown for the suffering he presided over for so long.

It's taken 5 long years for the guilty verdicts to be handed down, I only hope that the decision is made to rehome all the eagles to people who can genuinely give them a life of stimulation and some freedom which they deserve“.

In court yesterday, Sheriff Diane Turner said:

“It is blindingly obvious to me that there were some really significant issues with the overall standards in the facility and I'm satisfied that it did cause a risk to the welfare of the birds and that they did suffer because of that.“

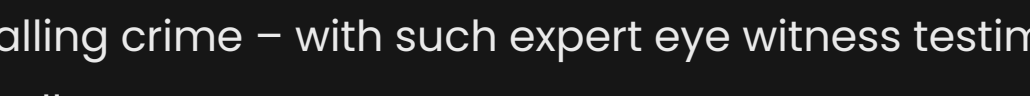
Knowles-Brown will be sentenced next month and the Sheriff is reportedly considering whether to disqualify him from keeping birds. If suitable homes to be found for the eagles it is unlikely that Knowles-Brown will be disqualified. If anyone reading this has suitable facilities, please contact the Scottish SPCA.

Knowles-Brown is a prominent figure in the falconry world, having served as the Chair of the Scottish Hawk Board and Vice-Chair of the UK Hawk Board.

The Hawk Board, which enjoys close ties with the Countryside Alliance, represents falconers, hawk-keepers and falconry clubs and provides welfare guidelines for those keeping raptors in captivity.

It also engages in political lobbying (e.g. it was against the Mountain Hare full legal protection) and Knowles-Brown himself has provided evidence to the Scottish Parliament's Rural Affairs Committee when it was considering its draft Protection of Wild Mammals (Scotland) Bill.

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6 thoughts on “Prominent falconer & eagle breeder Andrew Knowles-Brown guilty of welfare offences relating to ~90 eagles in Scotland”

steve68e245c5d8

October 15, 2024 at 4:02 pm

Can none of these birds be released?

Reply

Lorna Chandler

October 15, 2024 at 4:27 pm

How about the Hawk Conservancy Trust in Andover?

Reply

alsere32

October 15, 2024 at 4:29 pm

This makes very grim reading and took far too long it is a total disgrace these people should be sentenced to keeping any living creature and xxxxx xxxxx xxxxx xxxxx for this too take all this time before a decision was made is a very clear look at what is wrong with the justice system today truly sickening just like the middle ages . I am now getting to the stage where I am a little ashamed of being a member of a species who could behave in such a manner xxxxx xxxxx xxxxx xxxxx xxxxx xxxxx xxxxx xxxxx xxxxx. The possession of Eagles is surely licensed and regular should be carried out.

Reply

Keith Dancey

October 15, 2024 at 5:51 pm

What an appalling storey:-(

Reply

Owen Shrimpton

October 15, 2024 at 8:25 pm

why doesn't this appalling crime – with such expert eye witness testimony hit the national news for all to see.

Reply

fancystoats

October 15, 2024 at 9:48 pm

Given the behavioural impact on captive birds of prey, even on those birds kept in satisfactory conditions, I question the wisdom of this activity. It reeks of arrogance, self importance, money and hubris. Let them fly free.

Reply

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